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Alaska Nuggets

By FRANK B. CAMP
of Anchorage,
Alaska

Alaska Nuggets

By

FRANK B. CAMP

Author of

"American Soldier Ballads"
"Rhymes in Khaki", etc.



*Written and Printed in Alaska
by Alaskans*

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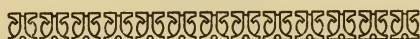
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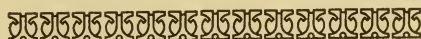
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The
Contents of
This Little Volume
Are Affectionately Inscribed
To The "Sour-Doughs"
of Alaska.
The Men and Women
Pioneers
of
"The Treasure House"
of the North,
Who Have Mushed Over the
Unblazed Trails
of
God's
Big Outdoor Land,
Establishing
a
Wonderful Spirit
of
Brotherhood
on Which
They Have Constructed
a
Lasting Foundation
For the Thousands
To Build On
Who Are Following
in Their
Footsteps.



Foreword



Throughout the ages which have elapsed since the first man was banished from the Garden of Eden, the wanderlust has lured both men and women to the far corners of the earth in quest of something new and strange.

The lure of the glittering metal called gold and the desire for unbridled freedom have caused man and also woman to leave behind the comforts of civilization to journey over the "unblazed trails" which lead through the "open places" of the big "out-doors."

These men and women are known as Pioneers and it is to them and the children of them that the credit should go for the blazing of trails into unknown lands.

The Pioneers of Alaska, those men and women who prospected the remote places of the Territory, where they established camps that have since become thriving towns and cities, deserve the lion's share of the credit for the development of Alaska.

These hardy, sincere men and women have builded a lasting foundation on which those who follow in their footsteps can erect permanent homes, and in the years to come the "Chechaco" who journeys to Alaska, will find all of those things that are to be found at the present time in the highly civilized communities throughout the world.

Alaska, now an infant in swaddling clothes will soon learn to walk. Her footsteps will be guided by the sons and daughters of the men and women who blazed the trails to the far camps, and as she grows she will take her rightful place among the other states of the union, and her people will have a voice in the councils of the Nation.

The verses in this little volume are not literary gems such as the famous poets have written; they are simply a collection of typical Alaskan life and have been written with the sincere desire to portray Alaska and the people of Alaska as they really are.

I am confident that those people who know Alaska will see the real in all the lines. I am also certain that those people who have yet to know the real Alaska will be greatly assisted in the lesson they must learn before they can know it, by reading these humble lines.

THE AUTHOR.

To Alaska

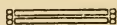


THE Home of the "Sour-dough"—
Both Woman and Man.
The Land of the "Sticker"—
Who marched in the Van.

A vast, wealthy Empire,
That's scarcely been scratched
By the pioneer "Mushers"
Who Won, Lost and Matched
The best years of their lives,
'Gainst the Hardship and Loss,
On cold, snowy Dog-trails,
On Swamps, Tundra and Moss.
To Alaska——The Magnet,
That drew ev'ry Creed,
Then sorted the "Weakling",
From those of the "Breed"
And left in the North-land,
A class without fear;
The Virile, Self-Confident
Much lov-ed Pioneer.
The Men and the Women,
Who have blazed ev'ry trail,
From Dyea to Dawson
With Dog-team and Sail.
Who have joined the Stampede,
Followed blind Hunch and Whim,
To Nome and the Yukon
And the far Kuskokwim.

To Alaska,——The Store-house
Of Treasures untold;
Coal Fields and Copper,
Crude Oil and Gold.
Salmon and Halibut,
Herring and Cod,
Fur farms and Canneries,
Mountains of God.
Land of the Big Things,
Home of the Great;
The Last Big Frontier,
The Forty-ninth State.

Somehow You Get It



(A tribute from the "Pioneer Mushers" and "Old Sour-doughs")

M AN, when we read the Things you write,
The Things that you never did;
Our old blood flows, and our old eyes light,
With the vision of Things long hid.

"You never were there on the Dawson Trail,
You never were one of the Bunch;
But somehow you've sensed the damned travail,
And somehow you get the Hunch.

"You write of the Things we used to do,
You vision them all quite real,
The pictures you draw are vivid and true,
Those days you can sure reveal.

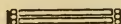
"You never took part in the damned stampede,
You never saw strong men weep;
But the Things that you write portray the Creed,
You've dug from the soil that's deep.

"You've garnered the Souls of the Pioneer,
You've winnowed them all and thrashed,
You've put into words, both sound and clear,
The Things that we've done and Cached.

"You've picked from the Sheaf the strongest Straws,
You've woven them into rhymes,
Some of the rhymes are full of flaws,
But they picture the Men and Times.

"And We who have done the Things you write,
Concerning the Days now past;
Feel as we read, you are one of the Breed,
That will Always and Ever last."

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Give Me Again



GOD, free me
From conventions that bind;
Release me from a narrow life
Both body and mind.

Give me Your mountains,
Your big forest trees,
Strength to worship You
On bended knees.
Give me Your open places,
Your silence supreme,
Give me the freedom
Of my daily dream.
Give me Your world things,
Your streams and Your hills;
Free me from conventions
That breed many ills.
Let me wander the old trails,
That lead through the wild,
As I did in the long ago
When I was a child.



To the "Chechaco"



STRANGER from the Outside, on a sight-seeing trip
Of Alaska the Gold-land from the deck of a ship,
These words that you're reading were written for you,
Ev'ry detail is perfect ev'ry picture is true.

You came to Alaska to spend a few weeks,
Looking for glaciers and high mountain peaks,
Skimming the surface, never looking beneath.
Returning with knowledge, you speak and bequeath

To those on the Outside, who eagerly turn
And hark to the lesson you never did learn.
You curtail the facts because you don't know,
The Heart of Alaska where the Wonder-things grow.

(Take a trip 'round Ohio, never enter the state,
Then go to New York and try to relate
Some facts 'bout the center you never have seen;
Now do you savvy the Thing that I mean?

When I speak of your ignorance, of the Big Place up here,
The Place called Alaska, that you can't vision clear
From the decks of a steamer that rides on the tide,
For you can't know Alaska 'less you journey inside.)

Take a Dog-team or Pack-horse and hit the Long Trail,
That leads through a canyon where shadows are pale,
Cross the Big Muskeag, the Tundra and Swamp
Where the cranberries blossom and Silver-tips romp.

Climb Mt. McKinley and see where the sun,
Rests ev'ry evening when its day's work is done.
Head up a river with pack on your back,
Stalk the Big Moose when you find a fresh track.

Get you an outfit, pick, shovel and pan
And hunt for the Gold, with a pard who's a man.
See the Birch forests, the clear, babbling brooks,
Explore the Far-places, the gulches and nooks.

Gill net for salmon and dig for the clam,
Watch the wise beaver constructing his dam.
Gather the gull eggs far up on a cliff,
Sail the rough waters in dory or skiff.

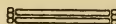
Voyage the Yukon or far Kuskokwim
In flat-bottomed boat or Peterbur' slim.
Fight the Mosquito, No-see-'em and Gnat,
Pot a fat duck on a reed-grown flat.

Mush with the dogs over long, snowy trail,
Hark to the North wind murmur and wail.
Walk on the snow-shoe, glide on the skii,
Wallow through snow clean up to your knee.

GET ON THE INSIDE, LIVE WITH THE MEN,
WHO HAVE STUCK TO ALASKA, LIKE WOLVES TO A DEN.
MEET PIONEER MUSER AND REAL OLD SOUR-DOUGH;
DO ALL THESE THINGS STRANGER AND THEN YOU WILL
KNOW.



The Trails of Alaska



A LASKA trails are myriad trails,
The "Sour-dough" treads them all—
The Long Trails and the Short Trails,
Wherever he heeds the Call.

Some of the Trails are Smooth Trails,
Broad and level and straight,
Perfect as Man can make them,
Aided by God and Fate.

Some of the Trails are Sad Trails,
Paved with Sorrow and Fear,
Filled with the ghosts of blasted hopes,
And sprinkled with many a tear.

Some of the Trails are Gay Trails,
Filled with laughter and song,
Paved with the smiles of the happy,
And the joy of the care free throng.

Some of the Trails are Long Trails,
Crossing the desert of Life,
Filled with the bleached and scattered bones,
Of those who have died in the strife.

Some of the Trails are Short Trails,
Shaded by wonderful trees,
Where man may rest himself betimes
And spend glad hours at ease.

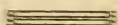
Some of the Trails are Evil Trails,
Ending where they begin,
Paved with blocks of Hypocrisy,
Shaded by trees of Sin.

Some of the Trails are Good Trails,
Built by a Master Hand,
Winding away for miles and miles
Till they reach the Promised Land.

All of the Trails are Branch Trails,
Leading away from the Main,
We may tread them all before we die,
But we all must come back again—

Back to the Big and Royal Trail,
'Fore ever we come to die,
For this is the Trail of Life and Death,
Of the How and the When and the Why.

When Wilt Thou?



① Tiny attic room wherein
My daily life is spent,
When wilt thou cease to close me in
And leave the sky my tent?

O' little table where I write
My songs when work is done,
When wilt thou turn to greenest sod,
Beneath the Midnight Sun?

O' little bed wherein I sleep
And dream outside the bars,
When wilt thou change to Mother Earth
Beneath the shining stars?

O' little life of narrow things
Lived on a narrow strand,
When wilt thou let my freed soul roam
In God's big Out-Door Land?



The Musings of a Sourdough

(While confined in a hospital with a broken leg)

HEY brought me from my cabin 'cause my good right leg
was broke,
They put me in this building where the damn air makes me
choke,

They took me from the Open and caged me in this pen,
And they told me I must stay here 'till my leg gets well again.

You can bet your life I'm restless, for my thoughts keep goin' back,
To the spruce gulch and the windfall, where I saw a marten track,
And my feet can't keep from itchin' for the trails I know so well,
'Cause the things that I keep seein' make me want to cuss and yell.

Why, I've heard the summer thunder in my ears the livelong day,
I have seen the lightning flashing on the hills across the way,
I have heard the bull-moose calling and the yapping of the fox,
And have watched the mallards flying in swiftly-moving flocks.

I've been hunting on the ridges where the huckleberries grow,
And the mountain sheep are playing in the everlasting snow,
Where the big brown bear is feasting on the luscious mountain fruit,
And the shadows of deep purple fill the canyons 'neath a butte.

I've been fishing in the rivers where the trout and greyling bide,
I've been poling on their waters that flow to meet the tide;
I have trapped the mink and marten and have robbed the seagull's nest,
And have seen again the sunsets on old Mother Nature's breast.

The spruce-hen and ptarmigan I have jumped along the trail,
I have heard the South wind sighing and the North wind loudly wail,
I've driven snarling dog teams, with harness taut and tight,
And I've mushed across the tundra when the stars were shining bright.

I have crossed the swamp and muskeag with never trail or track,
I have carried sixty pounds of grub upon my aching back.
I've climbed the steepest mountain peaks, ten thousand feet or more,
I've slept at night among the trees on Mother Nature's floor.

I've trailed the pesky wolverine, the moose and caribou,
Have fished for cod and halibut, have trapped the salmon too,
I've skied and snowshoed many miles 'cross drift and frozen crust,
Have washed from bed rock on a creek a poke of shining dust.

I've stampeded with a thousand men whose only thought was haste,
Across a thousand weary miles of barren icy waste.
Have swapped my poke for wine and "Hootch," in dancing hall and den,
But now I'm lying helpless in this nurse and doctor pen.

And I keep a havin' visions of these things I love the best,
That you get in old Alaska, where a man is surely blest
With a myriad of real things, that are fashioned on a plan
Which a "Sour-dough" can't help seein' if he's sure enough a man

The leg will do for mushin' when it's knit again they say,
And when it is I'm headed for a camp that's far away,
Snuggled in among the mountains, where the eagle builds its nest
And an old Alaska "Sour-dough" can sit him down and rest."



Jerry's GRAVE Mistake



HERE'S an old mound up at Dawson, where they buried
Jerry Lake.
He died one night quite suddin' when he made a GRAVE
mistake.

He was Dawson's holy terror with an auto-mat-ic gat,
But that night a stranger got him just below his Stetson hat.

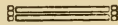
Now Jerry's trick when shootin' was to grab a fellow's right,
Then draw his auto-mat-ic and the fellow said "good-night."
He worked it very nicely on several well armed men;
But Jerry got his needin's when he tackled Sitka Ben.

Jerry had been drinkin' and his thoughts were slightly blurred,
When he stumbled into Sitka and passed the fightin' word;
He grabbed young Sitka's right hand, when a funny thing took place,
Young Sitka was left-handed. Powder burned old Jerry's face.

It was just a simple error in old Jerry's working plan,
He never stopped to figger on a lefty shootin' man.
Thus the mound at Golden Dawson, where they buried Jerry Lake,
He quit this life quite sudden when he made a GRAVE mistake.



Alaska's Wonder Blazes



(A vision of a Sour-dough now on the Outside.)

G'M a Sour-dough of Alaska
Who knows the Give and Take;
At Dawson, Nome, Iditarod,
I grabbed a handsome stake,
Then mushed it to the Outside
With all my Golden Pokes,
And invested them in business
That throttles me and chokes.

Today while working in my chair,
In office high up in the air,
Surcharged with smoke and other hazes;
My vision played a trick on me,
And set my eyes a roaming free,
Till once again I glimpsed the Wonder Blazes.

I saw the Blaze of Alaska, on the Blaze was a picture dear,
And the steaming haze of the housetops parted till it was clear.
It showed me the Trails now hidden, it pictured the mountains high,
The river sands, where with their hands, men pan for gold till they die.

It revealed the swamps and the forests, where the big moose live and
the bear;
Where the ptarmigans nest, on the high hill's crest, where the black
fox has his lair.
It painted the bright aurora, that shines with a myriad lights,
As it brightens the snow, where the North winds blow, chill on the
winter nights.

It etched all the babbling mountain streams, the riffles where big trout
play,
And the mountain sheep, as they frisk and leap, in the cool of a sum-
mer day.
It mirrored the haze of the wonderful days, in the land of the Mid-
night Sun,
And the gorgeous flowers, in their woodland bowers, and the webs
that the spiders spun.

It showed me the gold and the silver, the copper, the oil and coal,
With the caribou and the big wolf too, the drift and the prospect hole;
The white sea-gulls on the inland seas, the flight of the eagle bold,
The Silver Side and the Red Sockeye, that swim in the waters cold.

Showed a wonderful strand, in a glacier land and gleaming mountains
of snow,

Where the wintry gales, fill full the trails, when it's forty or fifty
below.

Showed boat and canoe, the rapids too, of rivers that swiftly glide,
Singing their song as they rush along, to join the ocean tide.

The malamute and the half-breed wolf, went flashing before my eye,
As they swung along, to the driver's song, with brush and head held
high;

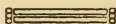
The yellow dust in the battered pan, the creek with its human jam,
The old road house on the winding trail, the cache by the beaver dam.

The pictures grew clearer and clearer, as they showed on the Wonder
Blaze,

They showed me again old Alaska and the rush of the Golden Days,
Once more I was craving to wander, once more I was longing to roam,
On Alaska trails, where Man wins and fails, the Blazes were calling
me home.



What Need Have I?



Of all my friends I like to think,
While living here upon the brink
Of God's big out-of-doors.
My memory often travels back
Along the trails, where dimming track
Is fading from the worn floors.

Yet—

What need of living friends have I
Who have the sun, the moon, the sky
And many trails without an end?
I who have the things I seek,
The babbling brook, the mountain peak,
With many days to live and spend.

Man may have real worthy friends
Along the crooks and turns and bends
Of the years through which he lives,
But are these friends, to hear and see
So goodly as the forest tree
That never takes but always gives?

The sun, the stars, the moon for friends,
The winding trail that never ends,
The rivers wide and lesser streams.
Each one of all these things is real,
Each one I know, each one I feel;
These things I know are not mere dreams.

O man of puny human breed,
O man of narrow, selfish creed,
Man with your tiny deeds and fears;
Most helpless of the things of God,
An egotistical, brutish clod,
Of what avail your hopes and fears?

O woman of the shallow mind,
Your selfish, pleasure-loving kind
Holds sway but for a wee small hour;
You are fair for a short while,
Your hair, your eyes, your form, your smile
Are all surpassed by any flower.

* * *

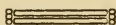
O many, many friends have I,
Real women and real men;
And memory often leads me back
To spend sweet hours with them—

Yet—

What need of man or maid have I,
Who have for tent the distant sky,
And books all filled with golden words?
What need have I of worldly things,
When Nature full contentment brings,
With friends of flowers and singing birds?



Looking Back



(The Old Sour-dough Talks)

WAS the steamer Alameda which was tied up at the dock,
She had brought two hundred tourists, dressed in nifty suit
and frock;

People from the "Outside" who had booked to see the sights,
In the land of Gold and Dog-teams, Sour-doughs and Northern Lights.

On the dock among the home crowd was an ag-ed, whiskered man,
Who had mushed to ev'ry gold camp, with shovel, pick and pan,
Who had made a dozen clean-ups, from Forty-Mile to Nome,
Who had stayed in old Alaska and builded him a home.

He was watching all the strangers, when a fellow young and slim,
Stopped and asked a dozen questions that seemed to bother him;
But the old man only answered with a nodding of his head,
Until the lad had finished, then he spoke and slowly said:

"You say you're just tourin' Alaska.

Got a ticket on that there steam boat.

Paid one hundred and sixty simoleons,

To rubber at things while ye float.

"Bought passage from the States to old Juneau,

To Seward, Latouche and Valdez,

Just to glimpse a few towns and us "Sour-doughs",

Who are livin' up here where you freeze?

"Say stranger, while the boat is unloadin'

The freight from the depths of her hold,

Take a walk with me down to my cabin

And I'll tell ye some things 'bout the gold

"That we washed in old Nome and 'Dorado,

In Fairbanks and Dawson and here,

When the big rush was on in the Nineties,

And a fellow could buy hootch and beer.

"Come in and sit by that table,

And I'll get you a glass of home-brew;

For a drink ye can't buy, since the law made it dry.

Drink it. Here's lookin' at you.

"Now hark and I'll teil ye a story
As true as the gospel ye know,
About a stampede and a long, hungry Swede
And a dog-team that raced through the snow,

"When the Swede with a thousand old-timers,
Stampeded and hit the long trail,
For a place that's close up to the Circle,
'Bout twenty-five days from the mail.

"We was washin' the tailin's near Dawson,
And dancin' and drinkin' good Hootch,
And some had a poke, while others were broke
And the by-words were Steal, Take or Mootch.

"T were a night when the old Borealis
Was outshinin' the moon and the star,
When a stranger blew into the Nigger's
And throwed a big poke on the bar.

"A wave of his arm were the invite,
For ev'ry damn man in the place;
His parka was froze and the end of his nose
Stuck out through the beard on his face.

"We drank and the story he told us
Was the cause of the damndest stampede,
Which started that night, 'neath the old Northern light,
And the first on the trail was the Swede.

"The Swede with his ten snarling wolf dogs
Was off like a bat out of hell,
And far down the trail, where the shadows were pale,
We could could hear the sled creak and his yell.

"Shut your eyes young fellow and picture,
The scene as it were on that night;
The gold-maddened men, in that tough dancin' den;
The struggle, the scramble, the fight.

"To get an outfit for the mushin',
Grub, clothin', a dog-team and sled,
To stake out a claim, that meant fortune and fame,
Or maybe a grave for the dead.

"In them days I was some skookum,
And I owned ten big malamutes;
And the second man out, on that long snowy route,
Was me with my swift-movin' brutes.

"Now the Swede as I said was a-leadin',
He'd a start of more than a mile,
When I yelled at 'em Mush, and was off with a rush,
With visions of gold in a pile.

"Now four hundred miles with a dog-team
Ain't like ridin' on boat or on train,
'Cause the damn piercin' cold sinks in and takes hold,
And fills your whole body with pain.

"But gold is a strong drawin' magnet,
Be it restin' on desert or ice,
And once it takes hold it will draw young and old,
And ev'ry darn one pays the price.

"Well them dogs that I driv' on that night, sir,
Was the finest 'tween Dawson and Nome,
All big malamutes and strong pullin' brutes
And the North with its snow was their home.

"Four days and the Swede never sighted;
Not a movement behind or before,
Not a ghost of a sign, but the fresh runner line,
Like marks on a white painted floor.

"Now the Swede was a brute with his dogs sir,
He'd cuss 'em and beat 'em and rave;
But this Circle Stampede was the end of the Swede;
He died, but he ne'er had a grave.

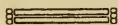
"How come it? Well listen I'll tell ye,
'Twas the eighth day and blowin' a gale,
When I come on three dogs froze stiffer than logs,
And the sled overturned on the trail.

"There was tracks and some blood on the snow sir,
And pieces of parka and boots,
What was left of the Swede, on the Circle stampede;
He'd been e't by his own wolfish brutes.

"There's the whistle a blowin' now stranger,
Dont' be starin' as if you were doped,
'Tis the truth that ye've heard, take an old Sour-dough's word,
Who has suffered as much as he's hoped.

"And when you have finished your voyage,
Of seein' Alaska from ship,
Remember the Swede and the Circle Stampede
And the trails where it dont' pay to slip."

Gold Pan Pete



WE called the man a "panner" and we named him "Gold-pan Pete,"

Though he never seemed to have a streak of luck;
But with all his many failin's, he would pan the gravel
tailin's,

Where a fortune very often had been struck.

He was what they called a "panner", from old Juneau up to Nome,
From Nome to Golden Fairbanks and Valdez.
Couldn't stand the Golden Fever, got a stake, then had to leave 'er,
And he rambled back to Seward by the seas.

Washed the placer down at Hyder, with a hopper and a spider,
But he couldn't find a color in the sand,
At Iditarod and Dawson, he staked a Golden crossin',
Then left it for another rumored land.

Panned the creeks of El Dorado, roamed around in Colorado,
Hit the Verd-e mines they found at old Jerome,
Prospected the Mackenzie, when the place was in a frenzy,
To "Gold Pan" any placer creek was home.

Journeyed down to California, where the native sons sure scorn-ye,
Washed the Siskiyou where it leaves the mountain side,
Then returned to old Alaska, where the Sour-doughs never ask-ya,
Any questions that will hurt your bloomin' pride.

Was in Goldfield and Bonanza and the land of old Carranza,
Where he drifted with a burro for a pard,
Twenty years he panned and dusted, very nearly always busted,
Then he struck it, 'bout a thousand to a yard.

'Twas a day when "Gold Pan" wandered, with his grub-stake almost
squandered

To a creek that emptied into Arctic sea,
Where a man without a creed and a filthy, drunken breed,
Were diggin' in the gravel that was free.

He watched them and the glitter of the gold dust made him bitter,
For he savvied that the creek was what he'd sought,
Through countless, weary ages, on the many lettered pages,
Of a life that had never brought him aught.

As he watched the pair a washin' and heard their drunken joshin',
He couldn't help but feelin' that his luck had petered out;
Then he saw the bank a slippin' and he heard a roar and rippin',
But the diggers never heard his warning shout.

For a thousand tons of gravel, when it's started sure can travel,
And it ain't no use to cuss it or to rave;
It buried breed and Squaw-man, 'fore the eyes of startled "Gold Pan,"
In a very, very handsome golden grave.

Then "Gold Pan" was the owner of the creek he called the Moaner;
He could wash the gleamin' gravel all alone.
So he started in a cleanin' with an object and a meanin',
For the nuggets and the dust were all his own.

He built him sluice and rocker and started in to block 'er,
And cleaned a hundred thousand on the spit.
Wasn't what you'd call a wonder, but it made him rich, by thunder,
'Fore the bodies in the gravel made him quit.

As he stacked his golden treasure, he could feel the joy and pleasure,
That had side-stepped all his efforts through the years,
That he'd spent in weary travel, washin' ruby sand and gravel,
While a livin' with his blasted hopes and fears.

He visioned many lost thing, home and wife and wedding ring,
As he wandered o'er the back-track many years,
He saw again the faces in the old familiar places;
Faces full of laughter and of tears.

He was back in Indiana, with a 'girl named Susananna,
On a Sunday that had come in old September;
He could see her tearful eye, when he said his last good-bye;
Many things from out the past he did remember.

Now "Gold Pan" sluiced the sidin' of the creek where gold was hidin',
And washed the final color in his pan.
Then he fixed the cache quite tidy and left the place on Friday
To follow out his careful, well laid plan.

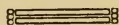
His head was rather dizzy, for his mind had been quite busy,
'Bout the people and the places where he'd go,
But he banished all the sadness and his heart was full of gladness,
As he slowly mushed the back trail through the snow.

On the sixth day he was cruisin' through a gulch where mud was oozin'
From the hillside, and the trail on which he trod,
When he heard a roar and rumble, felt the shake and saw the tumble;
Then he crossed the Great Divide to meet his God.

And a Bohunk who was spad in' where a railroad crew was gradin',
Ten years later found his bones and poke of gold,
And this tale that I've related, an old Sour-dough simply stated,
Just the story 'bout Old Gold Pan that he told.

Pannin' gold since Ninety-seven. Struck the gold close up to Heaven,
Where the Circle bends beneath the Midnight Sun;
Then Mother Nature spilled him, when a snow slide come and killed
him,
And his many days of pannin' all were done.

Alone



(The young Alaska Pioneer in the Big Woods of Alaska)

I MISS you, my dear laughing lassie
When the sky is aflame in the West,
When the rain is a pouring
And the winds are a roaring
And the wild things have all gone to rest.
The rain dashes hard 'gainst the cabin,
The wind holds a sigh and a moan
And the damp, chilly air fills me full of despair;
I'm busy, but I am alone!

I call you, my dear, smiling lassie,
My voice carries far on the wind,
I reach forth my arms with a yearning,
But they hold aye the ghost of your kind.
I think of the love that you gave me
'Fore I left for this big, wooded zone;
And I shudder for life's so uncertain,
I'm working, but I am alone!

I want you, my dear, loving lassie,
Up here where a fellow is free,
I want you to hold as I did, dear, of old,
You would cuddle and nestle by me.
The storm and the rain would be banished,
The darkness and dreariness flown,
If you were but here, with me, sweetheart dear,
I'm willing, but I am alone!

I need you, my dear, winsome lassie,
My heart yearns by day and by night,
The miles that divide us seem endless,
The hours and the days none too bright.
There come to me visions of you dear,
So clear in this far Northern Zone,
That the blues are with-held and my doubts all dispelled;
I'm doing my work, but alone!

I miss you, I call you, I want you,
I need you, dear girl of my dreams;
Here all alone in Alaska
I am ever lonely it seems.
The stars and the moon are now shining,
And the storm has ceased with a tone
Of shrieking despair, far above in the air.
I'll finish, but I am alone!

The Trails Ahead



SHOW me the trails that wind ahead,
Where few men's feet have trod,
A camp fire bright and a spruce bough bed
And faith in the ways of God.

Inoculate me with the mystic lure
Of the myriad trails ahead,
As I walk on them in the early morn
When the rays of the sun are red.

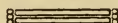
Fill my soul with the Wanderlust,
My body with vigor and vim,
And let me live in the big Out-doors
With the free, wild things of Him.

Give me the urge that will carry me on,
Till it comes my time to die,
And I will never dispute the Law
Of the How, the When or the Why.

Never will I retrace my steps,
O'er trails through a past now dead.
In the future years my only home
Will be on the Trails Ahead.



The Hunger Cry of the Wolf



HIGH on the hill
The wind is still,
No whispering, gentle sigh,
When to the ear,
Both loud and clear
Comes the wolf's bold hunger cry.

A weird, weird sound
That chills the blood
And wakes a sleeping fear,
Within the grouse,
The hare and mouse,
The moose and white-tail deer.

The hunger cry,
On hill so high,
Goes echoing around,
Until the night
So still and bright,
Excludes all other sound.

We hear the cry
And wonder why
Fear should so swiftly grow,
As to our kind
When brawn ruled mind
A thousand years ago.

* * * * *

The Hunger Cry of the big grey wolf,
Who hunts when the nights are still,
Brings fear to the heart of man and beast,
For it means, "I Kill, I Kill!"

When I Am Dead

(The Old-Timer meditates.)



WHEN I am dead in the Afterwhile,
People will yet remember to smile;
But all I will ask that they do for me
Is to bury me 'neath a big spruce tree,
That will wave its branches over my head
To sweeten my sleep when I am dead.
A few may sneer and a few may sigh,
But I will not heed them as there I lie,
For thus it must be with Lover and Friend,
Love must finish and Friendship end.
If the men whom I knew in Alaska's woods,
Will drink me this toast, "He delivered the goods",
Why I, who so love them, one and all,
Will sleep in peace 'till the final call.
O' many may laugh and a few may weep,
But laughter and tears won't trouble my sleep,
For I shall be but a pile of dust,
A dried up body incased with rust.
My old malamute, Big-heart Pete,
Will run with the pack, when they hunt and eat;
He'll work in the lead on the same old sled
With the malamute pups when I am dead.
Big-Heart my dog and maybe Lee
May fail to smile when they think of me,
They'll strive to reason, but fail to guess
That Life is little and Death is less.
They both may sorrow a little space
Till someone elects to take my place,
But all their sorrow and grief and pain
They shall expend upon me in vain,
For I will never shed tear or smile,
When I am dead in the Afterwhile.

The River of Hope

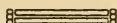
HERE is a river that flows and flows,
Through the land of mountains, trees and snows;
The "Sour-doughs" call it "River of Hope,"
That heads in the gulch of the steepest slope
Of a towering mountain capped with white,
That glistens and shines like a diamond bright.
A peak you can see for a hundred miles,
Raising its head in the Valley of Smiles,
Where the eagle lives and the mountain sheep
Romps and plays in the canyons deep;
Where the North wind rests for an hour or so,
Before it makes ready to howl and blow,
Where the big trout hide in riffle and pool
And the wild things are taught in Nature's school.

The River of Hope is a magical stream,
And each of its pools holds a captive dream,
A wonderful dream of some nomad bold
Who washed its sands in the quest for gold.
Dreams of opulence, days of ease,
Dreams of love and the feel on his knees
Of a little child of his blood and bone,
And the arms of a woman, her love his own.
Dreams of the power the gold would bring,
Wine that sparkled, women who sing,
Dreams of a mother and boyhood days,
Came to his mind through the golden haze
As he toiled by the side of his fellow man,
On the sandy bars with shovel and pan.
Some of his dreams were realized,
Others were lost or subsidized,
Many were born but soon dispelled
When never a color the black sands held.

But dreams are dreams, Wise Man's or Fool's,
And they sank in the waters and filled the pools
Of the River of Hope, that flows and flows,
Through the land of mountains, trees and snows.

River of Hope, where the sunlight gleams,
Your mirrored pools hold golden dreams.

With My Pipe



(The Old Prospector meditates)

WITH my pipe in the hours of twilight,
As the smoke wreaths twist and curl
I sit and live old memories
Of friendship with many a girl.

Back in the haze and dimness,
Of the years that have flown by,
I can glimpse the many faces
That made me laugh or sigh.

Their lips as in yore are willing,
But the kisses I cannot feel,
Though yearning, pouting and smiling,
They come to me very real.

I thrill with anticipation,
As I puff at the glowing bowl.
I think of the old temptations,
Of body and mind and soul.

In the twilight I sit conjuring
The past that was filled with joy,
Seeing the girls I used to know
When I was a carefree boy.

The smoke wreaths form their faces,
Their eyes, their mouths, their hair;
As I sit among the shadows—
Every one of them is there.

Up here in old Alaska,
I have been most thirty years,
Removed from girls I used to know,
Their laughter, smiles and tears.

The years are passing swiftly,
But at times the world's my own,
When pipe and twilight shadows
Bring the girls that I have known.

There was Julia who punched the typewriter,
A clerk named Miss Ellinor,
Mamie and Zella and Jennie,
And Mazie who worked in a store.

I'll always remember dear Esther,
Whose hair was a golden brown,
And Ruthins, a dear little woman,
And Frances of chorus renown.

Marie, the cute little dancer,
Still holds a place in my mind
With Peggy, Mildred and Dolly,
Who were surely three of a kind.

There was Ethel so cold and stately,
And Hattie whose hair was a flame;
Etta and Mary and Paddy,
Gladys and Alva and Mame.

I'll never forget saucy Nonnie,
Nor Grace with eyes of light blue,
Nor Della, nor Amy, nor Hannah,
Nor Johnnie, nor Sarah, nor Sue.

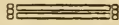
Marion, Myrtle and Rachel,
And dear little winsome Mae,
With Genevieve, Nellie and Clara,
Talk to me ev'ry day.

My pipe and the hours of twilight,
When the smoke wreaths twist and curl,
In my cabin here in Alaska,
Old memory sails unfurl.

And one my one the faces
Of the girls I used to know,
March smiling past, until the last,
Is blended with the glow.



Elliott Jim



GMET him one day on the Circle road,
Toting a gun and packing a load,
Consisting of grub and the hide of a bear;
Dirty he was, from his feet to his hair.

Two months' growth of beard on his chin,
Almost toothless and ugly as sin;
High top rubbers and patched mackinaw,
With a quid of tobacco stuck in his jaw.

He stopp'd when he saw me and when I reached him,
Says, "How-de-do stranger, I'm Elliott Jim,
Trapper of bear and other furred game,
The ketchin' of which has given me fame.

"Who might ye be and where might ye go?
A stranger I'm thinkin' I'd sure like to know;
Just sit on this log and I'll tell ye a tale,
Concerning a bear, a big grizzly male.

"He'd bust from the pen with a trap on his paw,
Early in spring, about the first thaw,
And totin' the trap that weighed forty pound,
I trailed the big critter 'cross ten miles of ground.

"Right to the mouth of a big, rocky den,
When a big rock a fallin' closed tight the pen;
Now there was the bear all sealed up tight,
And nothin' to move him except dynamite.

"So I gets me a stick and lighted a fuse,
Backs away twenty feet and started to muse
'Bout the size of the hide on that big grizzly bear,
When a mighty explosion shook the whole air.

"A ton of the rock just sailed through the air,
And fell on that meadow you see below there,
And the meadow was filled with moose, a big herd;
Now this is the truth, don't be doubtin' my word.

"When I tell ye the rock just killed twenty-four
Big fat moose and wounded a score,
And when I looked in the cave, I almost died,
'Cause the bear was blown clean out of his hide."

'Twas Elliott Jim who told me this tale,
The day we met on the Circle trail.
A bigger liar I never have met,
And the stories he told I will never forget.

Brown bear stories 'bout monstrous bear,
The breadth of their feet, the length of their hair,
The ten foot spread of a Kenai moose,
And the ptarmigan as big as a goose.

Gold strike stories 'bout golden poke;
The tale of the wolf he had to choke;
How he had killed a hundred teal,
With a shot that he aimed at a wounded seal.

Indian stories, gruesome and wild,
Murders of women and innocent child,
How he had captured Chief Big Boar,
Who raided his town and bathed in gore.

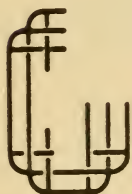
Tales of the woods and things he trapped
Were spun by the hour as the others napped.
The "Skinned Coyote" most split my side,
When it ran away minus its hide.

Now Jim was a type you all do know,
Here in this land of gold and snow,
Big-hearted devils of gypsy creed,
Pioneer trappers of sturdy breed,

Who believe all the tales they love to tell,
With never a thought of Heaven or Hell;
Not much education had Elliott Jim,
But Baron Munchausen had nothing on him.



The Old Trails



T O-NIGHT my thoughts are roaming
O'er the old trails I have trod;
I walked them with the Devil,
But never once with God.

I walked them with a Maiden,
The devil's closest kin,
An airy, fairy lassie
Who was suckled by Old Sin.

Her name? Intoxication.
How we roamed the crooked trails;
She was fickle, she was shallow,
And I suffered the travails.

She would laugh and jest and bubble
With an effervescent mirth,
That was naught but surface laughter
Of no worldly good or worth.

Yet she was fascinating
And I was but a fool,
Who hadn't learned my lessons
In Life's important school;

The school of vast experience,
Where the soul of man is cast
And sometimes flawed and twisted
Till his span of years has passed.

So Intoxication wooed me
And won me for a while;
When we trod the Trails of early days
She always seemed to smile.

She was a new and false sensation
And I came to know her well,
As we walked the trails together—
The crooked trails to Hell.

In the ev'ning 'neath the bright lights
Of Pleasure she seemed born,
But one morning gray I glimpsed her
As she was, of glamour shorn.

When I saw I quick divorced her
And cast her from my life,
And I ceased to walk the old trails
Where trouble's always rife.

* * * *

But the Maiden often haunts me,
With her shallow, fickle smile
As I walk the new and stranger trails
Seeking things worth while;

And at times I often wonder
Like old Omar in the past,
If she does not help the Big Sun
His brightest sunshine cast.

The Babbling Brook's Answer



The Man Asks:

BABBLING brook of the mountains,
Fed by the melting snows,
Speeding along o'er the mossy stones
Where is it your water flows?

Babbling brook of the forest,
Flowing through thicket and glade,
Dashing madly through canyons
Where shadows of purple fade.
Where does your water go to,
As it tumbles and splashes down
The mighty crags of the mountains,
From the height of their snowy crown?

The Brook Answers:

Curious man from the city,
Free from your daily task,
Bend your head and come closer,
I'll answer the questions you ask.

Where does my water go to,
Where does it flow and flow?
These are the questions you've asked me,
These are the things you would know?

Some of it goes to the Wild Things
To keep them from suffering thirst;
Thus it was planned by Nature and God,
My water for them comes first.

The sleek black bear and the silver-tip,
The wolf, the moose and the deer,
Ptarmigan, spruce-hen and myriad birds
Drink of my waters clear.

The busy squirrel, the mouse and the mole,
The porcupine, weasel and mink,
And the eagle bold, the owl and the hawk
Come to my banks to drink.

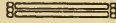
Some of my water goes to the Sun,
And some of it feeds these trees,
But most of it to the river flows
And finds its way to the seas

Where it mingles with other waters
That flow from a thousand streams;
Till it reaches the Land of Promise—
On an Isle of Wonderful Dreams.

* * * * *

Curious man from the city
Have I answered your questions well?
Is there aught that I failed to mention,
Is there more you would have me tell?
Then man from the crowded city,
Drink once more ere you go,
Quench your thirst with my waters
That swiftly and gladly flow.

At Times



AT TIMES I like to be alone.
I'm not set 'gainst nice friendly ways,
Or prayin' much for lonely days,
But when alone where all is still,
On mountain high or smaller hill,
All by myself, somehow I feel
That Life is wonderful and real,
And that the earth's just flowing o'er
With things I've never sensed before.

At times when I am all alone,
I've talked with many kinds of birds,
And they have answered me with words.
And flowers of many colored kinds,
Strange blossoms with their perfumed minds,
Have nodded to me as I strolled,
Or touched me as I stretched and lolled
Upon the warm earth 'neath a tree
That whispered forest lore to me.

At times it's nice to be alone
And listen to the North wind blow
Along the trails all white with snow,
Or hear the gentle, murm'ring breeze
Of the South wind through the trees,
And watch the sun on mornings rise
And streak with red the distant skies.
'Tis then that God appears to me,
And with His eyes I clearly see.



The Lost Water Hole and the Hidden Trail



FOR twenty years I have roamed the world
And have lived like a rolling stone;
I've loafed and idled, I've worked and toiled,
In the Tropic and Arctic Zone.

I have sweltered out in the blazing sun
On the deserts dry of the south;
Where I've watched the cattle all dying
Through the months of a stifling drouth.

I have packed and tied a mining kit
On a burro's narrow back;
I have faced the sand storm's blinding force
With never trail or track.

I have scratched the desert's burning sands,
With its lure of curs-ed gold,
And have fought with the deadly norther,
With its sleet and its biting cold.

I have toiled and I've mucked and I've wandered
In the blistering, killing heat,
With my canteen empty of water,
And with never a bite to eat.

I have felt my tongue all a-swelling,
And my mouth growing parched and dry,
As I watched the buzzards soaring
Far above in the burning sky.

I have staggered along wastes that blistered,
In God's naked, forgotten land,
With my feet all cut and bleeding
From the scorching, terrible sand.

I have cursed the God that's above me,
And I've damned all my doubting soul,
As I searched the long-dried-up desert
For the sight of a water hole.

"Then I found it."

I have labored and toiled in the frozen north,
With pick and shovel and pan,
I have washed the sand of many a creek,
Where a man is always a man.

I have tramped the trails through the virgin snow,
With snow-shoes, rifle and pack,
And have felt the cold like a stab of a knife,
As I lay in a trapper's shack.

I have faced a blizzard that raged and roared,
With the snow clean up to my knees,
I have felt my body grow chill with cold,
And my hands and my feet would freeze.

I have mushed with the dogs eight hundred miles,
To a place near the Northern Lights;
And have counted a million gleaming stars
That shone through the winter nights.

I have thawed the dirt with a raging fire,
And have dug in the heated ground,
Panning the mud, the rock and sand,—
Though never a color I found.

I have cursed the cold and the blinding snow,
The wind, and its whining wail,
As I searched for a blaze, on spruce and birch,
And a sign of the long lost trail.

“Then I found it.”

The Lost Water Hole and the Hidden Trail—
At two extremes of the earth,
The finding of which have saved my life,
And given my faith new birth.

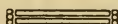
Dying of thirst in the desert heat,
Cursing my God and my Soul,
When all of the time the hand of Him
Was drawing me near the Hole.

Freezing to death in the Arctic wastes,
With body and soul turned clod,
Till an unseen Hand has shown me the trail
And bid me believe in God.

Years I have lived in the barren wastes,
Years in the city's strife,
But the Lost Water Hole and the Hidden Trail
Have taught me the lesson Life.



Red Blood



GOD!—how it flows through my veins to-day;
How it bids me cease work and go play.
How it pulls at the bonds that are holding me here.
How it brings to my mind the real things I hold dear.

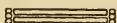
The swing of the bat, the loud sounding crack
As it meets the ball, the dust on the track
Where the horses are running, the throng and the cries,
Then the whirl of a wing as the swift mallards rise,
The echoing shot, the hit, then the splash;
The still, virgin woods, the hunt and the crash
When the big Kenai moose breaks cover and runs,
The Red Blood flows mad with the sound of the guns.

God!—how it always flows and flows,
How it carries me back to the Land of Snows,
To a wonderful land of gleaming gold,
Where monster glaciers are ages old.

Here where I'm tied to the sordid things,
My heart beats free and the Red Blood sings;
Sings me this song, "You are Red Blooded".
Sings till my soul is quickly flooded,
Like a lowland where a dam has burst its bonds.
Once again I live the olden days
On Arctic trail and desert ways;
Again I see the dog-teams and the miraged ponds.

I choke with thirst and freeze again,
In desert heat and snow and rain;
Once more I feel the Silence of the Open Places,
Where a man must be a man,
Who is fashioned from the plan
Of the Red Blooded, never-dying, virile races.
God!—how it flows through my veins each day,
The rich Red Blood, how it makes me pray.
Compels me to feel the Lure and Call,
Convinces me I will end it all
For the Freedom of the Open—
Its spell and fascination,
For the countless things of beauty
In its wonderful creation.
I have heard the Call, I have felt the Lure
For the Red Blood makes me feel,
It has taught to me the lesson
That Life is very real.

I Want You So



(The thoughts of a young prospector alone in the hills.)

MY tired back aches 'neath the cuss-ed pack,
As I mush through the canyons deep,
The cool creek babbles to shining sun
And the winding trail grows steep.
The hill breeze murmurs, now high, now low,
It makes me lonely. I want you so.

The snows have melted since I saw you last,
The trout are climbing the creeks,
The days and the weeks are fleeting fast,
And far above the peaks,
I can see the moon that we used to know;
The wolves are howling. I want you so.

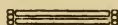
The stars and the moon wait the end of time,
But my hopes grow gray and black;
I slip and tumble as the trail I climb,
A man who will gaze back
To days that died many moons ago.
The birds are singing. I want you so.

I had sworn to banish the thought of thee,
When the days were long and blue,
I shackled the heart that beats in me
And laughed at the ghost of you.
But always you follow wherever I go;
The winds are sighing. I want you so.

I see you at every crook and turn
Of the trail that is winding its way.
See you in dreams when I sleep at night
And vision you through all the day.
The love fires kindle and burn and glow,
And my heart beats fast, for I want you so.

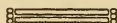
The days and the nights, the sun and the moon,
All blend in the canyons pale,
The old north wind sings a solemn tune
As the clouds o'er the mountain sail;
My thoughts take flight with the winds that blow.
My life grows shorter. I want you so.

The Human Forest



MEN are like trees in a forest,
God put them both on the earth,
Giants are some—without blemish,
Others,—Weak saplings at birth;
Some of them rise above others,
Reaching a mark that is high;
Full many grow strong in life's sunshine,
The weaker in shadows must die.
Some are shattered by lightning,
Others are rotten, yet thrive;
Many seem shrunken and lifeless,
No fruitage to show they're alive.
Rich though the soil some will perish,
With never a reason why;
Clinging to rocks, others flourish,
Towering up to the sky.
Some are felled for their lumber,
And others are killed by a shock,
Some are snuffed out like a candle
As quick as the tick of a clock.
Some are marked by The Cruiser,
While many He just passes by,
For many a one is worthless
Though it holds its head near the sky.
Many are lawless and greedy,
Taking much more than they need,
Killing the younger and weaker,
Destroying the new sprouted seed.
Some get their strength from the foul soil,
Others draw theirs from the pure,
Still others by means artificial
Are enabled their lives to endure.
Some produce fruits that are needed,
Others a fruit that's a fake,
And others bear fruit that is deadly,
Which kills if another partake.
Yes, men are like trees in a forest,
And God put them both on the earth,
And when the day comes for His judging,
Each will be judged by his worth.

The Chinook Wind



THE Chinook Wind was blowing through the gulches and the hills,
You could hear the joyful babbling of the tiny flowing rills,
All the mountain streams torrential, through the forests
madly whirled—

Chinook was chasing Winter with her banners all unfurled.

The ptarmigan were strutting 'mongst the willows on a log,
The big bull-moose was wading in the steaming meadow bog,
You could hear the squirrels chatter and the blue-jays loudly scold,
For Chinook was warm and balmy when Old Winter lost its hold.

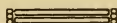
The chickadees were happy and the bear were on the hills,
And the mountain trout were leaping from the riffles and the rills,
'Twas spring time in Alaska, in the land of Big Out-doors,
Chinook was gently blowing on Mother Nature's floors.

The forget-me-not and violet were stirring 'neath the soil,
The birds had started nesting and the buds were in a foil,
The new green grass was sprouting where the white sheep frisked and
played,
And Chinook among the tree-tops, gently murmured as they swayed.

The ice had left the rivers and was floating out to sea,
The tern and gull were mating on the bleak and rocky lea,
The sky was clear as crystal, and we offered up a prayer,
And thanked the Lord for living, on that Spring-time morning rare.



The Alaska "Skeeter"



MANY bards have sung their lays,
Many poets scribed their muse,
About a thousand subjects
That cheer you and enthuse;
But of all the thousand subjects,
Beating hearts and birds that tweeter,
No Kipling, Burns or glib Masonic writer,
Has ever writ in verse the "Laska Skeeter."

Now I who write am not a famous poet,
Nor a rhymers, nor a verser, nor a bard,
So if the meter doesn't meet,
As I scribe the damn moskeet,
Overlook it 'cause the subject sure is hard.

As my pencil slowly writes,
I can feel their stinging bites,
And can hear 'em always buzzing
Like a swarm of angry bees.
I am swatting 'em and slamming 'em,
I am cussing 'em and damning 'em,
On my forehead, on my fingers, on my knees.

There is netting on the door,
And a smudge upon the floor,
And coal-oil on the lonely window pane,
But they thrive upon the oil,
And the netting doesn't foil,
While the choking, yellow smudge
Just burns in vain.

I have burned a thousand powders,
And have used a hundred dopes
That were guaranteed to kill 'em and destroy,
But in powder and in dope
I have lost all faith and hope,
'Cause they fill the "Laska Skeeter" full of joy.

In the tundra and the muskeag
And along the river banks,
You will find the "Laska Skeeter"
With his strip-ed, hairy shanks;
You will find him always ready
With his buzz and sting and bite,
To worry you and hurry you
Throughout the day and night.

You can use to double head-net
And a pair of heavy gloves,
While prospecting 'long the
Rivers and the creeks,
But with hands and face protected,
Other spots are soon selected,
Which they perforate with
Drill and tempered beaks.

They can drill a rubber boot,
Or a heavy leather shoe,
And a pair of woolen socks or maybe two,
For their bills are double-jointed,
Telescopic and steel pointed
And it doesn't take 'em long to push 'em through.

There's the big and hairy devil
That buzzes ere he bites,
Buzzes like a saw a-cutting logs,
His damn persistent buzzing awakens you of nights,
Like an auto brake a-stripping all the cogs.

The bumble bee and humming bird
Can buzz and hum a bit,
And the dynamo can sing a lusty lay,
But the pesky "Laska Skeeter",
With its loud and angry tweeter,
Can drown them all together any day.

Then you find the little devil,
Who is never on the level;
The one who laughs at window, door and net.
He will locate ev'ry crack
With uncanny, certain knack;
He causes you to worry, cuss and fret.

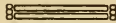
You can kill 'em by the score,
But you always find some more,
Waiting for a chance to sting and bite,
And they do this on the wing,
Buzz and bite and madly sting,
Never waiting 'till they find a place to light.

Old New Jersey has a skeeter
That is vicious and depraved.
The South has many skeeters
That are far from well behaved,
And along the Mississippi
From its mouth to Fond-du-Lac,
You will find a billion skeeters
Always waiting to attack.
Minnesota also has 'em and the Panama Canal,
In any swampy jungle they will choose you for a pal.
You will find them on Long Island,
And around the Puget Sound;
In Sunny California and New Mexico they're found.

But gather them together—
All these species from Outside;
Bring 'em all together
From the places they abide.
Then compare them with the skeeter
That I mention in these lines,
And you'll find the "Laska Skeeter"
When he's hungry for a lunch,
The meanest, orn'ry critter
Of the whole damn bunch!



Broken Glass



A BUNCH of 'laska pioneers were swapping tales one night,
About the days of Gold and Hootch, the Struggle and the
Fight
To win a Stake and get a Poke that weighed one hundred
pound,

Where creeks had turned to glaring ice, 'tween banks of frozen ground.

Each Sour-dough told his tale of Gold and how he Won or Lost
A fortune where the flinty ground held many years of frost.
How many came and many went, who sought the gleaming gold;
Now all the tales I'd heard before, but one MacDonald told.

Says Mac, "You've heard some tales tonight, about the curs-ed metal
That plucks the years from out your lives, as maiden plucks the petal,
From off a flower to ascertain, the truth about her lover;
Now let me tell you all a tale you won't find 'tween a cover.

"'Twas just about the time that Nome was in her golden glory,
When I with English Jim for pal, packed outfit into dory
And headed south most eighty miles, for place we never doubted,
Bluff City was the golden spot, which had been muchly touted.

"Well, English Jim and I arrived, without a sign of trouble,
Located claims and built a shack, where we could prick the bubble.
Installed a sluice and two search lights, whose eyes were bright and
glaring,
So we could see to work at nights and keep a perfect bearing.

"Now English was a human sponge; his thirst was always mighty,
And when with liquor he was soused, his mind was rather flighty.
You've all heard tell of Austin Pete, whose s'loen was in Bluff City,
You all have tasted Hootch and Beer and sung a little ditty.

"We'd worked the claims for 'bout a month, in manner very steady,
When English says to me one night, 'Mac lad, I sure am ready
To take a poke, before I choke, and chill this burning fever,
That parches throat and gets your goat. What say tonight we leave 'er

"'And take a stroll to save our soul, by drinking beer and lickier,
At Austin Pete's, where Sour-dough meets, to argue, lie and dicker.'
Says I to him, 'You're talking Jim, along a line I'm thinking,
There's nothing more I'd like to do than spend a while a-drinking.'

"'Twas early morn, when frost is born, before we quenched the burning
And twenty quarts, of many sorts, went with us when returning;
And twenty quarts of bottled beer, each day we kept a getting
From Austin Pete's, with little eats, to stabilize the wetting.

"Now we were stewed and quite imbued with many foolish notion,
When word was brought that some were caught, on ice-floe in the
ocean.

A party of Bluff City men, en route for homes and Christmas,
Were headed out, without a doubt, some miles beyond the Isthmus.

"Among the men was Sitka Ben, a mighty skookum Lusher,
Who English knew, as I know you. A Sour-dough and a musher.
And English when he heard that Ben was floating on the ocean,
Conceived a plan to save the man. A drunken damn-fool notion.

"There in the shack, says he, 'Old Mac, you've heard the tragic story
About old Ben and other men, afloat on ice-floe hoary,
Afloat on wicked ocean wave, with all their hopes a-dashing.
With your permission Mac tonight, I'll take aloft the big searchlight
and start the thing a-flashing.'

"Now we'd caroused and sure were soused, both English and Yours
Truly;

For most a week we'd hit the peak in manner quite unruly,
Therefore when English asked to go, I said 'You are a hero.
Go take the light into the night, where it is touching zero.'

"Take full charge Mac, of claims and shack and hold them till to-
morrow,

And I will climb with light sublime and pierce this night of sorrow.'
Thus English spoke, then slammed the door and left me there to
wonder,

In drunken daze, about the ways of men who live and blunder.

"The play was staged. A blizzard raged. The trail was steep and
ragged.

The man was drunk, fit for his bunk. The rocks were sharp and
jagged.

The search light was a monstrous thing and never built for toting
Up mountain side, to shine on tide, where ice-floe was a floating.

"Two hours went by, and I was dry and feeling like the devil,
For booze will make your nerves all shake and drag you b'low the
level;

When I heard a feeble cry, like someone who was slipping;
I opened door and on the floor, fell English red and dripping.

"He was all slashed and badly gashed. His clothes were all in tatters,
His face was cut and full of smut, but detail little matters;
The awful sight quick sobered me. I thought he sure would ramble
To other clime, where tide or time, don't figure in the gamble.

"I stripped his clothes, all stiff and froze, and bathed the cuts and dressed them,
And heard him rave that he would save. He damned them all and blessed them.

He'd take the light up on the hill, regardless of the blizzard,
And show them all, that he had gall, and nerve like Jerry Izzard.

"Then sighing deep, he fell asleep and never groaned or muttered,
And only I, could savvy why, his life so nearly fluttered.
He tried to help a friend he knew, a friend who was in danger.
He'd have played the game and done the same, if Ben had been a stranger.

"The blizzard spawned. The morning dawned, with floe and men discovered,
And English Jim. May God bless him; his trail I quick uncovered—
Straight up the mountain most a mile, I found the crooked line,
But of the track, that he took back, I never saw a sign.

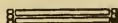
"It disappeared where rock-ledge reared, its head above the snow,
But here and there, where side was bare, a dent would plainly show
Where something hard had left a mark; a something big and round
Had bounded swift, from rock and drift, and stamped the frozen ground.

"With deep resolve, I tried to solve, this track I couldn't class,
When far below, stuck in the snow, I found a piece of glass;
And then I knew just what it was had butchered Jim that night;
He'd fell inside and took a ride, in the bloody old search light.

"And locked within, that battered tin, with shattered broken glass,
Old English Jim, with chances slim, had rode the rocky pass.
I found the light close to the shack, not more than eighty rod,
And puzzled much, but couldn't clutch, the many ways of God."



The Silence



I HAVE heard words in the Silence,
That shall never be voiced by man,
I have heard words, wonderful words,
In the darkness which I never could scan.

I have watched alone in the Silence,
And I've listened to wonderful songs,
Songs never sung by us humans
As we struggle and tug at our thongs.

Voices have broken the Silence,
Voices so ringing and clear,
That each spoken word, my whole being stirred,
As it fell on my listening ear.

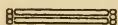
I am happy at times in the Silence,
Cheerful, contented and glad,
But also at times I am pensive,
And lonely and tearful and sad.

Alone day and night in the Silence,
I've clutched at the favors Life flings,
Getting my share as I roamed here and there,
And the pleasure the mere clutching brings.

Of the friends I have made while a roaming,
The Silence has proved to be best,
Though woman and man have polished the plan,
Give me Silence and take all the rest.

And to wander alone in the Silence,
Is to me a most wonderful thing,
When I do live all my dreams out,
For the Silence has taught me to sing.

An Alaskan Lake



YOUR waters gleaming,
The sunlight streaming,
Then darkness earthward crawls;
The sun's last glimmer
Grows dimmer, dimmer,
Night's curtain slowly falls.

Your waves a-moaning,
Restless and groaning,
Pounding shore, in varied size;
The fog ascending,
With clouds is blending,
The stars are blinking their eyes.

Your waters swelling,
With murmur telling
A story ages old.
Now dashing madly,
Then crying sadly,
Seeming at times to scold.

Then capped with froth,
Your waves grow wroth,
And angry lash the shore;
With clouds of spray
Through night and day,
Emitting sullen roar.

Your waters peaceful,
Calm and ceaseless
With just a gentle roll;
Bring me contentment,
Banish resentment
And soothe my heart and soul.

The North West Wind and the North West Land



THE North West wind and the North West Land
Are wonderful things to me.
The Wind as it blows and blows and blows,
The Land that is washed by the sea.

Many a thousand miles I've roamed,
On many a foreign strand,
But never a wind like the North West Wind,
Nor a land like the North West Land.

The North West Wind is a powerful wind
When it sways the mighty trees,
It's a cold and treacherous, bitter wind
On the nights when the rivers freeze.
It's an angry wind and a raving wind
When the blizzards rage and roar,
At times its' a soothing, restful wind
As it blows through the cabin door.
It's a gentle wind through the summer days,
Fragrant with scent of pine;

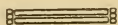
A sighing, caressing, pleading wind
That rustles the clinging vine.
It's a cooling wind, a refreshing wind
That tempers the summer days,
It's a care-free wind and a restless wind
That sings and dances and plays
Over and through the North West Land,
From inland river to sea,
Decking the waves with snow white caps
And swaying the forest tree.

From the Arctic seas, with their ice-bound coasts
And thousands of years of snow,
To the prairies covered with golden wheat
The North West Wind does blow.
For thousands of miles the Wind holds sway,
From the Yukon to Puget Sound;
On the highest crest of the Rocky Range,
It howls with a fearsome sound.

It blows and blows o'er the North West Land
Where people are strong and free,
Where the Big Places are and Life is Real,
And every one has a key
To the Garden of Health and the Bower of Joy,
And the Kingdom of Big Out-Doors;
Where they follow the Trails that wind away
Through meadow and woodland floors.

The North West Wind and the North West Land
Are wonderful things to me.
The Wind as it blows and blows and blows,
The Land that is washed by the sea.
Many a thousand miles I've roamed,
On many a foreign strand,
But never a Wind like the North West Wind,
Nor a Land like the North West Land.

The Lure of the Untrod Trails



THE trails untrod by the feet of men
Are luring me on today;
The untrod trails of forest and stream
Bid me to come and stay.

The bright camp-fire with its tongue of red,
The smell of the pungent smoke,
The yap and the snarl of the husky team
The leader of which I broke.
The cry of the gulls, the glint of the gold,
The Northern Lights in the sky.
The roaring sound of the rapids swift,
The holes where the big trout lie.
The track of moose in the virgin snow,
The babble of myriad streams,
The mountains high where the mad winds blow,
Are all a part of my dreams.

I want to climb to the top of a hill,
Some thousands of feet in the air,
Where the bald eagle lives and rears her young
And the wolf hob-nobs with the bear;
Where you see the sun as it rises and sets
And the Silence is tense and still,
In the Magical Land of Untrod Trails
That wind through forest and hill.

These things are part and parcel of me;
The Mountains, the Trees, the Trails,
And the Lure that I feel will carry me on
When Love and mere Friendship fails.
The lure of the trails untrodden by men
Grows strong as the days flit by,
A yearning I can describe with words
Brings tears to my dimming eye.
Magical antidote for Love,
Though sprinkled with womens' tears,
Found in your lure, is a marvelous cure
And a future of wonderful years.

A lone free lance of the Big Out-Doors,
With nothing to draw me back,
As I tread once more the Untrod Trails,
With rifle, snow-shoes and pack.

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